



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2006-110

Thursday, September 21, 2006

CONTACT: Joseph Donovan, Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

**Burmaster's 2007-09 budget returns
equity to educational opportunity in Wisconsin**

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster introduced her biennial state education budget as a blueprint for returning equity to educational opportunity in Wisconsin.

"Wisconsin has a long tradition of quality public education prekindergarten through grade 12," Burmaster said. "We established our country's first kindergarten over 150 years ago and have nation-leading performance on college admission tests *this* year. However, quality education in Wisconsin has been compromised. School districts throughout our state are less able to meet the 20 educational standards that established in law a foundation for equity. They are increasing class sizes, laying off teachers and support staff, and reducing course offerings and extracurricular activities. Quality education in Wisconsin is beginning to suffer."

Burmaster's budget lays out a bold plan to increase global literacy and competitiveness; provide support to rural schools; support public libraries; improve student achievement and close the achievement gap; address educational needs in Milwaukee; provide for agency operations and resources; improve school finances; and reduce the impact of revenue limits. The state superintendent's budget calls for maintaining the state's commitment to two-thirds funding with an increase in overall school aids of 3.3 percent in the first year and 3.2 percent in the second year of the 2007-09 budget.

Global Literacy and Competitiveness

Recognizing that children in other countries learn two or three languages before finishing high school, giving them an edge in the global marketplace, Burmaster's budget would provide funding for elementary world language instruction. Additionally, it will provide competitive seed grants for advanced science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses to address achievement and participation gaps in those subjects and support economic development in Wisconsin.

Milwaukee Budget Proposals

To lessen the threat to education in Wisconsin's largest city, Burmaster's budget proposes grants for schools to extend the school year into the summer, funding to restore arts education to Milwaukee Public

(more)

Schools, support for the Preschool to Grade 5 and service-learning programs, and provisions to address the current state funding flaw related to the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, helping Milwaukee taxpayers and the public schools.

Call to Action and Incentives for Teaching in High-Needs Schools

Burmester's budget provides a means to attract the best, brightest, and most experienced teachers to the classrooms of our high-needs schools to truly raise achievement. Her call to action and service to all experienced, nationally board certified, and master educators in Wisconsin urges them to teach in the state's high-needs schools, especially in Milwaukee and small, rural communities. The budget would provide an additional \$5,000 for nine years as an incentive for teaching by nationally board certified and master educators in high-needs schools.

Rural Initiative

The state superintendent's budget will support rural Wisconsin by assisting rural schools, libraries, and communities as they struggle with declining enrollment, rapidly rising property values, and revenue caps. It includes a sparsity aid proposal of \$26 million for small, rural districts; assistance for declining enrollment districts; and expanded transportation aid to further assist all districts.

Improving Student Achievement / Closing the Achievement Gap

"I propose we continue to support and expand throughout our state what we know works," Burmester said. Her budget calls for:

- an increase in funding for the SAGE Program at \$2,250 per pupil and addition of new SAGE schools,
- a \$75 million dollar increase in special education funding over the next two years,
- an increase in and expansion of bilingual-bicultural aid,
- an increase for school nutrition programs including school breakfast,
- an increase in support for public libraries, and
- continued funding for 4-year-old kindergarten.

The budget also contains provisions for American Indian education, supporting gifted and talented pupils, expanding access to health services, before- and after-school programs, enhancing PK-16 councils, and online learning. To support lifelong learning and economic development, her library proposals address funding for BadgerLink, the state's on-line library; Public Library System aid; library delivery services; library service contracts; and school library aids.

School Finance and Revenue Limits

"With Gov. Doyle's leadership, we have been able to return to two-thirds state funding, and we must continue to honor our pledge to citizens, communities, and schools. We must continue this bipartisan commitment of two-thirds funding as long as revenue caps continue. And, the devoted people who educate our children every day deserve no less than the repeal of the QEO," Burmester stated.

"My biennial budget proposal works to lessen the threat to equity in educational opportunities for students across our state and ensure continued high-quality public education in the 21st century," Burmester said.

###

NOTES: State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmester's State of Education address is available on the Department of Public Instruction website at < <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/eis/prmenu.html> >. The 2007-09 budget narrative is available at < <http://dpi.wisconsin.gov/pb/index.html> >.

This news release is available electronically at < http://www.dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2006_110.pdf >.